

James Bennett  
Winter 2009

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Kenna 300I, 551-1910  
OH: Wed. 9:30-11:00a.m., and by appt.

RSOC 51  
**RELIGION IN AMERICA**  
MW 2:15-4:00 p.m. O'Connor 205

***Course Description***

This course provides an introduction to the development, character, and impact of religion in the United States from the pre-colonial era to the present. Guiding our investigation will be the ideas of contact, conflict, and combination. Course readings and discussions will center on the relationship between religion and the development of American culture. We will explore the variety of religious traditions and experiences that have shaped and been shaped by the American context. Given the time constraints of a quarter, the course cannot be exhaustive. Instead, we will examine representative episodes in American religious history that highlight larger themes and major turning points. The course will proceed in a chronological order. Among the topics covered are Native American traditions, colonial religious impulses, slavery, revivalism, spiritual creativity, religion and war, immigration, race, church and state, and modern religious pluralism.

***Course Objectives***

By the end of the course, students should:

- have a familiarity with major movements, moments, and turning points in American Religious History.
- identify major themes that connect different periods, places, and movements across the span of American religious history.
- be able to analyze both primary and secondary sources in the larger context of American religious history.
- be able to provide historical context for characterizations about the supposed decline or abundance of religiosity in the United States.
- read, summarize and critically analyze essay-length readings.

***Texts***

The following texts are required and are available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

R. Marie Griffith, *American Religions: A Documentary History* [AR]

Brian Moore, *Black Robe*

David Walker, *David Walker's Appeal*

*Additional Required Readings:* All of the readings not included in the above texts will be available on the course website in the ANGEL course management system. Students must sign-up for this course on ANGEL in order to access the material. ANGEL is accessible from the SCU main web page via the "SCU Login" link in the upper right corner. If you do not have an ANGEL account you will need to create one. Once into your ANGEL account, on "My Page," click on "find a course" under the "Courses" banner. Search for this course. Once you have located the course, click on it to enroll. You will need the password "puritan" in order to enroll. Once enrolled, you will be able to access all readings marked "Angel" in the schedule below, as

well as course announcements, schedule changes, and grades. The readings will appear in the “lessons” folder. Supplemental readings may be announced or distributed during the quarter.

Students seeking additional background and insight may also wish to purchase Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002) [RHA]. Recommended readings from this textbook are listed in the course schedule below.

### **Course Requirements**

*Intellectual Engagement:* Discussion forms an important part of this course. As a result, the course will only be as good as its participants. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss the assigned readings at each class session in a thoughtful and lively manner. Attendance is only a necessary pre-condition for participation, not a measure of it. The intellectual engagement grade is based not only on attendance, but more importantly, on preparation and engagement of material in class discussions (i.e. regularly asking questions and participating in class discussions). For each class session in the schedule below you will find questions to help you think about and prepare to discuss the day’s readings. Because attendance is a precondition for intellectual engagement, students who miss more than two classes will be penalized at least one point per absence.

*Essay:* One four page essay (1000 words). Topics will be handed out approximately two weeks before the paper is due. Essays should be well-written, with a clear, focused thesis statement, supporting evidence and critical analysis, be free of grammatical and spelling errors, and include citations when appropriate (see note on academic integrity below). For essay grading criteria, see the “Rubric for evaluating Religious Studies essays,” posted on the course website.

*Family Religious Tree.* Write a narrative of your family religious tree. Tracing back your relatives as far back as you can, describe and analyze their religious affiliations. Pay particular attention to when and why changes take place (immigration/migration, geography, marriage, etc.). What trends emerge? What generalizations can you make? How does it compare to the assigned readings on religion and immigration? Are there any ways that your story confirms or challenges characteristics of the American religious experience that have emerged in course readings?

*Exams:* Both the midterm and the final exam will contain short answer (identification) and thematic essay questions. The final exam will be comprehensive.

### **Late Policy**

Assignments turned in late will be penalized a minimum of one point per day late.

### **Grading**

Grading is based on a possible 100 points for the quarter, weighted as follows:

Intellectual Engagement	10 points
Religious Family Tree	10 points
Essay	20 points
Midterm	25 points
Final Exam	35 points

Final grades will be based upon the following scale: A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D (60-69); F (below 60). Final grades are not negotiable, and cannot be changed, except in the case of clerical error.

The Santa Clara University *Undergraduate Bulletin, 2008-2009* (p. 345), identifies the standards for grades as follows: A (excellent), B (good), C (adequate), D (barely passing), F (not passing).

### ***Religious Studies Second Level***

As a second level Religious Studies Course, Religion in America provides students with a specific and coherent body of material in order to broaden the range of data that students use to think about religions, religious issues, and their connections to other disciplines, fields of study, and ways of thinking. Students must have completed a level one Religious Studies course in order for this class to fulfill the second Religious Studies Core requirement.

### ***Disability Accommodation Policy***

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disabilities Resources located on the second floor of Benson. Phone numbers are (408) 554-4111; TTY (408)554-5445. Students must register and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations

### ***Academic Integrity***

Students are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and ask questions of one another. However, all submitted and graded work must be your own and clearly distinguishable from the work of others. Plagiarism is presenting others' work as your own, or failing to cite the contributions of others to your own work. It matters not whether the work is from a fellow student, the world-wide web, or a traditional printed source. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask the instructor. The Religious Studies department and Santa Clara University take seriously the commitment to academic integrity. Any violations, including plagiarism or cheating, will result in an "F" and referral to the Office of Student Leadership for further action, as described in the *Community Handbook*. Additional information and resources are available at [www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/](http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/).

## **Course Schedule**

(Tentative: Schedule and readings subject to change)

Jan. 5 *Introduction: Contact, Conflict and Combination in American Religious History*  
Native American Creation Myths (handout)

*Compare and contrast the various creation stories: what insights do they provide for understanding native worldviews? what problems do they present?*

**\*\* Enroll for RSOC 51 on Angel Course Management System**

Jan. 7 *Religion in the Atlantic World*  
*Inter Caetera*; Ferdinand to Pope; Luther, "Letter to German Nobility" [Angel]  
*The Bull Sublimis Deus* [AR]  
Recommended: *RHA*, 3-14

*What do developments in late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century European Christianity suggest for the role and character of religion in the Americas?*

Jan. 12 Native-Colonial Encounters

*Black Robe* (all)

Recommended: RHA, 15-29

*What happens when different religious traditions encounter each other? What is conversion? Who is converted to what?*

Jan. 14 The Southern Colonies: English Settlement and the Encounter of Black and White

Act of Supremacy (1534); Thomas Bacon, "A Sermon to Maryland Slaves" [Angel]

Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" [AR]

Recommended: RHA, 30-48

*What religious and social implications emerge from the English response to the Protestant Reformation? How do Wheatley and Bacon understand the relationship between Christianity and slavery?*

Jan. 19 **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (no class)**

Jan. 21 New England and the Puritans: America as Chosen Nation?

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" [AR]

David D. Hall, "A World of Wonder" [Angel]

Recommended: RHA, 49-73

*What is America to the Puritans? What is God's role in America? What is the envisioned relationship between the civil and ecclesiastical order in American Puritan society? Compare and contrast the Puritans in Winthrop and Hall. How are we to understand the Puritans?*

Jan. 26 The Middle Colonies and Religious Pluralism?

Roger Williams, "Letter to the Town of Providence"; William Penn, "A Persuasive to Moderation..." [AR]

Penna Statement on Religious Freedom [Angel]

Recommended: RHA, 74-114

*How inclusive was colonial American religious toleration?*

Jan. 28 The (so-called) Great Awakening

Jonathan Edwards, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England*;

Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England*; [AR]

"Benjamin Franklin describes George Whitefield" [Angel]

*Was there a First Great Awakening? What accounts for such differing historical interpretations of the same period and events?*

Feb. 2 *The Role of Religion in the New Nation*  
Thomas Jefferson, “A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom,” James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments” [AR]  
Recommended: *RHA*, 121-38

*Was the United States founded as a Christian Nation? How religiously tolerant was the early United States?*

**\*\* Essay due at beginning of class**

Feb. 4 *The Antebellum Spiritual Hothouse: Evangelicalism and Liberalism in the New Nation*  
Joseph Smith, *The Articles of Faith and Revelation* [AR]  
“Joseph Smith Explains How an Angel Guided him to Found the Latter Day Saints” [Angel]  
*RHA*, 139-61

*How does each figure understand the role of religion? of revelation? How are these differing perspectives products of the new nation?*

Feb. 9 *The Antebellum Spiritual Hothouse: Gender and Reform in the Second Great Awakening*  
“Oneida Community and Bible Communism: Complex Marriage;” “Oneida: Complex Marriage and Family Planning;” “The Androgynous God and the New Humanity” [Angel]

*What social and gender concerns do the Shaker and Oneida movements address? What does the study of religion tell us about gender in the US?*

Feb. 11 **Mid-term Exam**

Feb. 16 **President’s Day (no class)**

Feb. 18 *Religion, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery*  
*David Walker’s Appeal*  
George D. Armstrong, from *The Christian Doctrine of Slavery* [AR]  
Recommended: *RHA*, 184-202

*How did African Americans understand God’s relationship to the United States? Were black and white Christianity two different religions?*

Feb. 23 *The Civil War and its Aftermath (in Song)*  
Songs of the Civil War; Lincoln’s Second Inaugural [Angel]  
W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Sorrow Songs” [AR]

*What is the connection between religion and music? How did religion help Americans make sense of the Civil War? How do these interpretations continue to shape Americans’ understanding of their national, regional and racial identities?*

Feb. 25 Religion and Immigration  
Mary Antin, from *The Promised Land; Pittsburgh Platform* [AR]  
Recommended: RHA, 209-230

*How did the United States reshape the religious experiences of immigrants? What was the role of religion in the immigrant experience? How does the experience of religion in your family compare to the experiences we have covered in this course?*

**\*\* Family Religious Tree essay due at beginning of class**

Mar. 2 Modernism and Fundamentalism  
Woodrow, *Evolution*; [AR]  
Charles Hodge Denounces Darwin's Theory of Evolution;" Genesis 1&2 [Angel]  
Recommended: RHA, 291-321

*What are the different ways that people understood the Bible? What was the relationship of religion and theology to the emerging disciplines of geology and modern history?*

Mar. 4 The Civil Rights Movement  
King, *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*; [AR]  
Malcolm X, "God's Judgment on White America" [Angel]  
Recommended: RHA, 374-97

*How do Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X understand America? What is the role of religion in their vision and rhetoric?*

Mar. 9 Church and State: Religious Freedom and American Religious Identity  
"Summary of Select Supreme Court Cases" [Angel]  
Recommended: RHA, 349-73

*How does the first amendment differ from earlier statements of religious pluralism in colonial America? How should the first amendment be interpreted? Is it inherently contradictory?*

Mar. 11 The New Religious Pluralism and its Challenges  
pewforum.org; and  
**One** of the following: Diana Eck, "Frontiers of Encounter"; Irene Lin, "Journey to the Far West"; Thomas A. Tweed, "Diasporic Nationalism and Urban Landscape"; Joanne Punzo Waghorne, "The Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World" [Angel]  
Recommended: RHA, 412-27

*How does the modern immigrant experience compare to that of the nineteenth and early twentieth century? Is the United States a Christian nation? a religious nation? What future challenges will the nation face in relationship to religion?*

**FINAL EXAM: Monday, March 16, 9:10am.**